The Wisden Club Cricket Hall of Fame

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MIKE PIKE



Scott Oliver meets a dedicated servant of club cricket who's been scrupulously keeping score for more than 60 years

In his 62 years and counting – lots of counting – as first-team scorer for Old Wilsonians CC (OW) near Bromley in Kent, Mike Pike has only ever missed three games. "I had it written into my 'contract'," he says, "that if ever Crystal Palace made the FA Cup final I would be excused duties. It has happened twice: 1990 and 2016, both times losing to Man United. I also missed a match when I went to see Pink Floyd at Knebworth."

Born in the final months of World War II, Pike attended Wilson's Grammar School in Camberwell and first took up the scorer's pen for OW in 1958, when a school prefect summonsed him during an assembly: "I'd like to see the Pike." He has never looked back, accompanying the club's journey from its days playing friendlies among the old boys' teams, then into the North Kent League, and finally into the ECB Kent Cricket League (KCL) structure, where they currently play in the third tier.

The 2020 coronavirus season was the club's most successful ever. They topped their regionalised 45-over mini league, which included KCL champions Beckenham and three other sides in higher divisions. In the subsequent T20 competition, they eliminated Beckenham in the quarters, and 2019 KCL runners-up Bexley in the semis, although the final, against Tunbridge Wells, has been postponed until next May.

During the early-summer lockdown, Pike kept spirits up with elaborate match reports on the club's virtual games of WhatsApp cricket –



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scorecards provided to him, as he doesn't own a mobile phone – a task he was quite used to having submitted copy to local papers for years. Indeed, when Kent skipper Rob Key – who played a few games for OW second XI in the 1990s – came to open the club's new nets, Pike filed a report and photos to the *Mercury*, although was bemused to have to explain to the sports editor who Key was.

Newspapers are a familiar world, Pike having spent his working life in the *Guardian*'s Research and Information department. He was a lifelong trade unionist with Unite, for whose retired members' association he performed secretarial duties. He has been OW's secretary for longer than anyone can remember, too – alongside the scoring and reporting, doing tea rotas, updating stats, and sitting on the OW Sports Association umbrella committee.

He has never been a player, though, with just a few undistinguished and reluctant outings in OW colours. "They appreciated that I was a better scorer than cricketer," he says. "They used to say, 'Bring your kit along in case we're short'. After a while, I got wise to it, because every other week they were short. So I stopped bringing my kit."

Pike is ready to adapt to computerised scoring if needs must, but his method remains a beacon of old-school minimalism: "I don't do balls faced. If someone asks me, 'How many balls did I face?', I say, 'Not enough, because you're out'." As for pet peeves, he collated these into an article for the KCL handbook: 'How to Abuse a Scorer'. Chiefly, have them do it alone.

Having spent the first 50 years of his scoring life working from a table – he suffered a broken arm one afternoon trying to parry a shot heading toward a young 'un playing obliviously behind him – in 2008 the OW Sports Association built him a proper scorebox, named the Mike Pike Scorebox in his honour. Wilsons old boy and after-dinner speaker Bob 'The Cat' Bevan, two days Pike's junior, and Mike Gatting led the ceremonials.

"Ian Forbes [OW Sports Association's sole life president] always used to say I'd have to do 50 years to get a scorebox. He wanted to call it the Mike Pike Memorial Scorebox. I said, 'Hopefully, you'll have to wait a good few more years before you can call it that'." Dot, dot, dot.

Do you know someone deserving of a place in the Wisden Club Cricket Hall of Fame? Let us know on Twitter @WisdenCricket or email editorial@wisden.com